

# Prepared Text of Reagan Speech on Central America Policy

Speech by the President

WASHINGTON, May 9 — Following is the prepared text of an address tonight by President Reagan on Central America, as made available by the White House:

My fellow Americans, last week I was in Beijing and Shanghai — three weeks from now I will be preparing to leave for Dublin, Normandy and the annual economic summit in London.

I am pleased that our trip to China was a success. I had long and thoughtful meetings with the Chinese leadership. Through our two countries are very different, we are building a strong relationship in a genuine spirit of cooperation, and that is good for the cause of peace.

This was our second trip to Asia in the last six months. It demonstrates our awareness of America's responsibility for leadership in the Pacific basin — an area of tremendous economic vitality. I believe our relationship with Asia will be a success for many years to come.

But that isn't what I want to talk to you about.

I asked for this time to tell you of some basic decisions which are yours to make. I believe it is your constitutional responsibility to place these matters before you. They have to do with your national security, and that security is the single most important function of the Federal Government. In that context, it is my duty to anticipate problems, warn of dangers and do what we can to keep harm away from our shores.

## Soviet Military Growth

Our diplomatic objectives will not be attained by good will and noble assistance alone. In the last 15 years, the growth of Soviet military power has meant a radical change in the nature of the world we live in. This does not mean, as some would have us believe, that we are in imminent danger of nuclear war. We are not.

As long as we maintain the strategic balance and make it more stable by reducing the level of weapons on both sides then we can count on the basic principle of the Soviet Union to avoid that kind of challenge to us. They are presently challenging us with a different kind of weapon: subversion and the use of surrogate forces — Cubans, for example. We have seen it intensifying during the last 30 years as the Soviet Union and its surrogates moved to establish control over Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Angola, Ethiopia, South Yemen, Afghanistan, and recently Cuba. It is the fate of this region, Central America, that I want to talk to you about tonight.

The issue is our effort to promote democracy and economic well-being in the face of Cuban and Nicaraguan aggression, aided and abetted by the Soviet Union. It is definitely not about plans to send American troops into Central America. Each year, the Soviet Union provides \$4 billion in assistance and it sends tons of weapons to foment revolutionary warfare.

## A Simple Defense Premise

The defense policy of the United States is based on a simple premise: We do not start wars. We will never be the aggressor. We must be strong in order to deter and defend against aggression — to preserve freedom and peace. We help our friends defend themselves.

Central America is a region of great importance to the United States. And it is so close — San Salvador is closer to Houston than it is to Washington, D.C. Central America is America; it is at our doorstep. And it has become the victim of the attack by the Soviet Union, Cuba and Nicaragua to install Communism by force throughout the hemisphere. The half of our shipping lanes through the Panama Canal, the major Caribbean shipping lanes and nearly half of all our foreign trade passes through the Panama Canal. Central America waters, America's economy and well-being are at stake.

Right now in El Salvador, Cuba is supported aggression has forced more than 400,000 men, women and children to flee their homes. And in all of Central America, more than 10 million people live in not most living in unbelievable hardship. Concerns about the prospect of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing to our shores, the risk to our security and our way of life will be infinitely greater.

## Consequences of Inaction

What we see in El Salvador is an attempt to destabilize the entire region and eventually move chaos and anarchy toward the American border.

As the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, chaired by Henry Kissinger, agreed, if we do nothing or if we continue to provide too little help, our choice will be a Communist Central America with additional Communist military bases on the mainland of this hemisphere and Communist subversion spread throughout the region.

If we come to our senses too late, there will be a real danger of even more directly threatened, and after a lack of American support causes our friends to lose the ability to defend themselves, then the risks to our security and our way of life will be infinitely greater.

But there is a way to avoid these risks, recommended by the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America. It requires long-term American support for the economic development, economic and security assistance and strong-willed diplomacy.

## U.S. Efforts for Peace

There have been a number of bilateral bilateral meetings with the Nicaraguan Government where we have presented specific proposals for peace. I have appointed two new ambassadors who have made more than 10 trips to the region in pursuit of peace during the last year. And Cen-

tral America's democratic neighbors — Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama — have launched a comprehensive initiative for peace through what is known as the Contadora process. The United States fully supports the objectives of that process.

We can and must help Central America. It's in our national interest to do so, and, morally, it's the only right thing to do. But helping means doing enough — enough to protect our security and enough to protect the lives of our neighbors so that that same live in peace and democracy without the threat of Communist aggression and subversion. This has been the policy of our Administration for nearly three years.

But making this choice requires a commitment from all of us, our Administration, the American people and the Congress. So far, we have not yet made that commitment. We have provided just enough aid to avoid outright invasion and enough to move the crisis, so El Salvador is being left to slowly bleed to death.

## The Size of the Threat

Part of the problem, I suspect, is not that Central America isn't important, but that some people in this Administration may be exaggerating the threat we face. Well, if that's true, let me tell you a few things to think about.

I want to tell you a few things to think about the real nature of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

The 15 years of the Nicaragua regime are Communists whose relationship and ties to Fidel Castro of Cuba go back a quarter of a century. A few years ago, the Sandinistas were trained in camps supported by Cuba, the Soviet bloc and the P.L.O. It is important to note that Cuba, the Sandinista and the P.L.O. have all worked together for many years. In 1978, the Sandinista and the P.L.O. joined in a declaration of war against Israel.

The Cuban-backed Sandinistas used the use of force to take control of the country in Nicaragua in the fall of 1979. They failed, they were then called to Havana, where Castro and his surrogates moved to establish control over successful Communist insurrection. He told them to tell the world they were fighting for political democracy in Nicaragua and not Communism. But most important, he instructed them to form a broad alliance with the remnants of the old regime and the Cubans to the Somoza regime. Castro explained this would divide Western public opinion, confuse potential critics and weaken the United States.

George Washington of Cuba. You see, that's what Castro managed his revolution. And we have to confess he fooled a lot of people here in our own country — or don't you remember when I was in the White House some of our press as the George Washington of Cuba?

I listened and I returned to Nicaragua and promised to establish democracy. The Organization of American States, in June 21, 1980, stated that the solution for peace in Nicaragua required that Somoza leave and that free elections be held.

At the time, the United States, by the way, the O.A.S. in writing that it would do these things. Somoza left and the Sandinistas came to power. This was a negotiated settlement, not a power-sharing between Communists and genuine democrats, like the one some have proposed for El Salvador.

What happened was that the previous U.S. Administration and other Western governments tried, in a hopeful way, to encourage Sandinista rule.

## Nicaragua Election Delays

It took some time to realize what was actually taking place; that almost from the moment the Sandinistas and their cadres of 50 Cuban covert advisers took power in July 1979, the internal repression of democratic groups, trade unions and civil groups began. Rights to free speech were denied. Freedom of the press and freedom of assembly became virtually nonexistent. There was an outright refusal to hold genuine elections coupled with the continual promise to do so. Their latest promise is for elections by November 1984. In the meantime, there has been an attempt to wipe out an entire culture, the Miskito Indians, thousands of whom have been killed or have been driven from their homes and are now starving and abused. Their villages, churches and crops have been burned.

The Sandinistas engaged in anti-Semitic acts against the Jewish community. And they persecuted the Catholic Church and publicly humiliated individual priests. When Pope John Paul II visited Nicaragua last year, the Sandinistas organized hostile demonstrations, but the results at his and his message of peace. On Good Friday, some 100,000 Catholic Christians staged a demonstration of defiance. You may be hearing about that demonstration for the first time. It was not widely reported. Nicaragua Bishop in January 1981, having recently said, "We are living with a totalitarian ideology that no one wants in this country."

## The Support of Terror

The Sandinista rule is Communist reign of terror. Many of those who fought alongside the Sandinistas saw their revolution betrayed; they were rejected power to the new government; some were imprisoned, others exiled. Thousands who fought with the Sandinistas have taken up arms against them and are now called the contras. They are freedom-fighters.

What the Sandinistas have done to

President Reagan with members of a group of Americans who monitored the election Sunday in El Salvador. From the left are Senators Pete Wilson and John H. Chafee, Representative G. V. Montgomery, Max Kampelman, chairman of Freedom House, and Representative Mickey Edwards.

Nicaragua is a tragedy. But we understand and come to grips with the fact that the Sandinistas are not content to brutalize their own people. They seek to export their terror to every other country in the region.

I ask you to listen closely to the following quotation:

"We have the brilliant revolutionary struggle in Nicaragua... The struggle in El Salvador is very advanced. It is understood the problem of Central America. He understood Castro. And he understood the long-term goals of the Soviet Union in this region.

That statement was made by a Salvadoran guerrilla leader in March of 1981.

Shortly after taking power, the Sandinistas — in partnership with Cuba and the Soviet Union — began supporting aggression and terrorism against El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala. They opened training camps for guerrillas from El Salvador so they could return to their country and attack its Government. These camps still operate. Nicaragua is still the headquarters for Communist movements and diplomats have been caught in Costa Rica and Honduras supervising attacks carried out by Communist Cuba's Cubans.

The role that Cuba has long played for the Soviet Union is now being played by the Sandinistas. They have become Cuba's Cubans. Weapons, supplies and funds are shipped from the Soviet bloc to Cuba, from Cuba to Nicaragua, from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran guerrillas. These facts were confirmed last year by the House Intelligence Committee.

The Sandinista regime has been waging war against its neighbors since August of 1979. This has included military raids into Honduras and Costa Rica which still continue today.

And they are getting a great deal of help from their friends. There were 160 Cuban personnel in Nicaragua in 1979. Today that force has grown to 10,000. And we are being criticized for having 55 military trainers in El Salvador. Manpower support is also coming from other parts of the terror network. The P.L.O. has sent men and so has Libya's dictator Qaddafi. Communist countries are providing military assistance, including tanks, artillery, rocket launchers and help in the construction of military bases.

Just last week a Soviet ship began unloading heavy-duty military trucks in Nicaragua's Corinto Harbor. Another Soviet ship is now off its coast with more trucks and 150 Soviet jeeps.

## Nicaragua's Military Growth

Nicaragua's own military forces have grown enormously. Since 1979, their trained forces have increased from 10,000 to over 100,000. Why does Nicaragua need all this power? Why did this country of only 2.8 million people build this large military force?

They claim the buildup is the result of the anti-Sandinista forces. But that is a lie. The Sandinista military buildup began in January 1981, long before the anti-Sandinista freedom-fighters had taken up arms.

They claim the buildup is because they are threatened by their neighbors. That, too, is a lie. Nicaragua's next-door neighbor, Costa Rica, doesn't even have an army. Another neighbor, Honduras, has armed forces of only 16,000.

The Sandinistas claim the buildup is in response to American aggression. That is the most cynical of all. The truth is they announced at their first anniversary, in July 1980, that their revolution was going to spread beyond their own borders.

When the Sandinistas were fighting the Somoza regime, the United States' policy was: Hands off. We did not attempt to interfere. But the United States did everything to show its openness toward the Sandinistas, its friendliness, its willingness to become friends. The Carter Administration provided more economic assistance to the Sandinistas in their first 18 months than any other country did. But in January 1981, having concluded that the Sandinistas were arming the Salvadoran guerrillas, the Carter Administration sent military aid to El Salvador.

Attempt at Friendship

As soon as I took office, we attempted to show friendship to the Sandinistas and provided economic aid to Nicaragua. But it did not work. They kept on exporting terrorism. The words of their official party anthem describe us, the United States, as the enemy of all mankind. So much for our sincere but unrealistic hopes that if only we truly try

harder to be friends, Nicaragua would flourish in the glow of our friendship and install liberty and freedom for their people.

The truth is: they haven't.

In 1980, Fidel Castro pledged that, once his revolution had triumphed, he would start a much longer and bigger war — a war against the Americans. That war, Castro said, "will be my true destiny." For 20 years, during Republican and Democratic Administrations, Castro has kept to his own path of revolutionary violence. Today, Cuba even provides safe passage for drug traffickers who poison our children. In return, of course, Cuba gets hard cash to buy more weapons of war.

## Kennedy's Grasp of Problem

We are in the midst of what President John F. Kennedy called "a long and bitter struggle" to defend freedom in the world. He understood the problem of Central America. He understood Castro. And he understood the long-term goals of the Soviet Union in this region.

Twenty-three years ago, President Kennedy warned against the threat of Communist penetration in our hemisphere. He said, "I want it clearly understood that this Government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations, which are to the security of our nation."

And the House and Senate supported him, overwhelmingly, by passing a law calling on the United States to prevent Cuba from extending its aggressive or subversive activities to any part of this hemisphere. When John Kennedy said today, I think he would be appalled by the guiltiness of some who invoke his name.

I have told you that Cuba's and Nicaragua's present target is El Salvador. And I want to talk to you about that country because it is a lot of misunderstanding about it.

## Salvadoran Efforts

El Salvador, too, had a revolution several years ago, and is now struggling valiantly to achieve a workable democracy and, at the same time, to achieve a stable economic system and to redress historical injustices. But El Salvador's yearning for democracy has been thwarted by Cuban-trained and armed guerrillas, leading a campaign of violence against people and destruction of bridges, roads, power stations, trucks, buses and other vital elements of their economy. Destroying infrastructure has brought more unemployment and poverty to the people of El Salvador.

Some argue that El Salvador has been left and the violent right and the violent right and that we must choose between them. That is just not true. Democratic political life is being born in the emergence of left to conservative. Trade unions, religious organizations, civic groups and business associations are emerging and flourishing. There is a small, violent right-wing as opposed to democracy as are the guerrillas, they are not part of the Government. We have consistently opposed both extremes, and so has the Government of El Salvador. Last December, I sent Vice President Bush to El Salvador with a personal letter in which I again made clear my strong opposition to both violent extremes. And this had a positive effect.

## Hopes for a Better Future

Land reform is moving forward. Since March 1980, the program has benefited more than 500,000 people or about a quarter of the rural population. But many can't farm their land; they must be killed by the guerrillas if they do.

The people of Central America want democracy and freedom. They want to live a better life. They want a healthy democracy. Honduras has a peaceful transition to democracy in 1984. And in Guatemala, political parties and trade unions are functioning. An election is scheduled for July 1984, with a real prospect that that country can return to full constitutional government in 1985.

In fact, 26 of 38 Latin American countries are democracies or striving to become democracies. But they are vulnerable.

By aiding the Communist guerrillas in El Salvador, Nicaragua's elected Government is trying to overthrow the duly-elected Government of a neighboring country. Like Nicaragua, the Government of El Salvador was born of revolution, but unlike Nicaragua it has held three elections, the last a presidential election last Sunday. It has made great progress toward democracy. In this last election, 80 percent of the people in El Salvador bravely confronted threats and guerrilla violence to vote for peace and freedom.

Let me give another example of the difference between the two countries — El Salvador and Nicaragua. The Government of El Salvador has offered amnesty to the guerrillas and asked them to participate in the elections and democratic progress. The guerrillas refused; they want to shoot their way into power and establish totalitarianism.

By contrast, the contras, the freedom-fighters in Nicaragua, have offered to lay down their weapons and take part in democratic elections; but there the Communist Sandinista Government has refused.

That's why the United States must support both the elected Government of El Salvador and the democratic aspirations of the Nicaraguan people. If the Communists can start war against the people of El Salvador, then El Salvador and its friends are surely in a position to defend themselves by blocking the flow of arms. If the Soviet Union can aid and abet subversion in our hemisphere, then the United States has a legal right and a moral duty to help resist it. This is not only in our strategic interest; it is morally right. It would be profoundly immoral to let peace-loving friends depending on our help be overwhelmed by brute force if we have any capacity to prevent it.

## Truman's Words Recalled

If our political process puts together, Soviet- and Cuban-supported aggression can be defeated. On this, the centennial and anniversary of President Harry Truman's birth, it is fitting to recall his words spoken to a Joint Session of the Congress in a similar situation: "The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter... we may endanger the peace of the world, and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation."

The speech was given in 1947. The problem then was two years of Soviet-supported Russian aggression against Greece. The Communists were close to victory. President Truman called on the Congress to provide decisive aid to the Greek people and to the parties rallied behind President Truman's call. Democratic forces succeeded and Greece became a parliamentary democracy.

Communist subversion is not an irreversible tide. We have seen it rolled back in Venezuela and, most recently, in Grenada. And there democracy flourishes, human rights and peace are more secure. The tide of the future is the tide of peace. It takes the will and resources to get the job done.

## Creation of Latin Panel

In April 1983, I addressed a Joint Session of the Congress and asked for bipartisan cooperation on behalf of our policies to protect liberty and democracy in Central America. Shortly after that speech, the late Democratic Senator Henry Jackson encouraged the appointment of a blue-ribbon, bipartisan commission to chart a long-term course for democracy, economic improvement and peace in Central America. I appointed a distinguished American from both political parties to the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America.

The Bipartisan Commission rendered an important service to all Americans — all of us from pole to pole in this Western Hemisphere. The commission presented positive recommendations to support democratic development, improve living conditions and bring the long-suspected dream for peace to this troubled region so close to home. The recommendations reinforce the spirit of our Administration's policies that we do so to our neighbors should be mutually economic and humanitarian but must also include sufficient military aid.

## Proposal to Congress

In February, I submitted a comprehensive legislative proposal to the Congress which would implement the commission's recommendations. And because this report presented a bipartisan consensus, I am hopeful that the Congress will take prompt action. This proposal calls for an increased level of resources beginning immediately and extending regularly over the next five years. The program is a balanced combination of support for the Central American democracies, diplomatic and security measures, with 70 percent of the dollars to be used for economic and social development. This program can get the job done.

The National Bipartisan Commission on Central America has done its work. We now await action by the Congress. Meanwhile, evidence mounts of Cuba's intent to double its support to the Salvadoran guerrillas and bring down that newly elected

## Students Riot in Pakistan; Opposition Politicians Meet

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, May 9 (AP) — Student demonstrators clashed with the police today, and opposition politicians vowed to boycott parliamentary elections.

Students in all major cities boycotted classes and marched to protest the government ban on student unions and the detention of about 100 students rounded up in previous demonstrations.

Opposition politicians, defying the military Government's ban on all political activity, met in a secret session to boycott parliamentary elections that are expected to be held this fall. The politicians, members of a militant alliance known as the National Front for the Restoration of Democracy, are demanding that Gen. Mohammad Zia hand over power to return Pakistan to civilian rule.